439 505 they completed their trip down the African coast to Zanzibar too quickly.

Once the trading voyage down the African coast to Zanzibar is completed, Arab and Persian craft usually load a cargo of mangrove poles for shipment back to Arabia, unless they have the rare luck of getting cargo on northern consignment. For centuries mangrove poles from Africa [342 314] have been used in the construction of houses in Arabia, where there is an extreme shortage of wood of any kind. Indian dhows never load mangrove poles since there is an abundance of wood in India. Mangrove trees are plentiful along the East African coast in swamps at certain river mouths; most poles come from the Rufiji Delta, a little south of Zanzibar, and from Lamu, north of Zanzibar. The poles are cut by the dhow crews, with the aid of Swahili cutters recruited for the purpose.

439 314 Alan Villiers[22] spent a month in the Rufiji Delta with a Kuwait crew obtaining a cargo of mangrove poles and has given us a most vivid description of pole-gathering activities. In the Rufiji Delta the mangrove trees grow in the soft, muddy delta, so that the cutters must wade in mud and water all day long. The branches are stripped with small axes and the poles loaded into small dugout canoes and brought to collection points where they are graded and stamped by government inspectors. Frequent and sometimes constant rain and savage mosquitos make a pole-gathering trip in the Rufiji Delta a suffering hell!

The Arabs have to pay the firm holding the pole-concession on the swamp for the poles, but in true Arab fashion they manage to load considerably more poles than they pay for. There is a well-organized pole-stealing racket, with everyone in on it, from the cutters to checkers and inspectors, with the exception of the head government forestry inspector. As the prevailing market price for mangrove poles in Arabia is about the same as the list price in Africa, the Arabs could not make any profit if they did not manage to load some extra poles.

439 In addition to mangrove poles, the Arabs may load cocoanuts, cloves, cocoanut oil, soap, or vermicelli. A private venture of the crew for the return trip from Zanzibar may be in lemons. Around Zanzibar lemons can be bought by the canoe-load for several rupees. The crew can squeeze the lemons and bottle the juice in bottles they have acquired along the way, using a pinch of salt as a preservative. The juice is sold at a nice profit in northern ports, where it is diluted for making sherbet.

In making the trip home on the southwest monsoon the Arabs waste little time, for the sooner they can get back, the more time they have for other activities before it is time to ship out again. Dhows from Oman

[22] A. Villiers, 55, pp. 237-261.